

(Anattā) Udāyī Sutta**The Discourse to Udāyī (on not-self)**

[Neither the body nor the mind has a self]

(Sāmyutta Nikāya 35.234/4:166-168)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2005, 2008

Introduction

The (Anattā) Udāyī Sutta contains Ānanda's reply to the monk Udāyī's¹ question on how consciousness can be explained to be not-self (that is, not having any eternal essence or is not a permanent entity). From the opening of the dialogue, we are made aware that Udāyī already understands or has heard the Buddha explaining *the not-self nature of the body* [§3a], and as such he now wishes to know how *consciousness* can be explained in the same manner.

Ānanda, in answering, uses *the three-factored perception model*, as given in **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18), which Mahā Kaccāna uses to explain how mental proliferation (*papañca*) occurs:

Avuso, dependent on *the eye and form*, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact.² With contact as condition, there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about.³ What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.⁴ What a person mentally proliferates is the source through which apperceptual proliferation⁵ impacts one regarding past, future and present forms cognizable through the eye.⁶ (M 18.16/1:111 f) = SD 6.14

Ānanda's answer is a simplified version of Mahā Kaccāna, of which he is obviously aware. Interestingly, the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta too has a heartwood simile, but no mention of any plantain tree (M 18.12/1:111).

The Anatta,lakkhaṇa Sutta (S 22.59 = V 1:33 f), in a fuller discussion of not-self, gives two arguments against the self-notion. The first (§3-11) is that we are merely the five aggregates, and none of these aggregates can come under our control (*avasa,vattitā*). If anything is to be regarded as our self, we should be able to willfully control it, but this is not the case. We only have the delusion that we are in control, or desire to be in control, but in reality, we are blindly or uncontrollably led on by our latent tendencies.⁷

The second argument against the self-notion (§12-16) is in connection with the three characteristics: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self. Not-self is demonstrated on the basis of the other two characteristics, impermanence and suffering. A fuller analysis of this not-self doctrine is given in **the Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta** (M 35.11-21).⁸

According to Buddhaghosa (MA 2:113 f), the Buddha proves the fact of not-self in three ways:

- (1) by showing that something is not eternal (*anicca*);
- (2) by showing that it is unsatisfactory (*dukkha*);
- (3) by showing both.

¹ This is Mahā Udāyī, the brahmin's son (ThaA 3:7): see **(Anussati) Udāyī S** (A 6.29) = SD 24.8 Intro (1).

² *Tiṇṇam saṅgati phasso*. For a discussion on this passage, see Rod Bucknell "Conditioned Arising Evolves: Variation and change in textual accounts of the *Paṭicca-samuppāda* doctrine." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 22,2 1999: 318 ff.

³ "One thinks about," *vitakketi*. On how when thinking stops, desires do not arise, see **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21.2.-2/2:277).

⁴ This verse up to here is also found in **(Samuday'atthaṅgama) Loka S** (S 12.44/2:71-73 = SD 7.5) and **(Sabb'upādāna) Pariññā S** (S 35.60/4:32 f = SD 6.17) in different contexts.

⁵ *Papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*, see SD 6.14 Intro (3).

⁶ This important passage is the earliest statement on the Buddhist theory of perception. See Intro (4).

⁷ S 22.59/3:66-68 = V 1:33 f = SD 1.2. For a discussion on the will (incl free will), see **Atta,kārī S** (A 6.38) = SD 10.10 Intro (2005).

⁸ M 35.11-21/1:230-234 = SD 26.5.

In the Anatta,lakkhaṇa Sutta, he shows that the five aggregates of existence (*pañca-k,khandha*)—form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness—are *dukkha* (unsatisfactory); in **the Cha,chakka Sutta** (M 3:282) he shows that the eye, etc, are *anicca* (impermanent); in **the Arahantā Sutta** (S 3:82 f), he shows that the five aggregates are both unsatisfactory and impermanent:

Bhikshus, visual form is impermanent: whatever is impermanent is unsatisfactory; whatever is unsatisfactory is not-self. Whatever is not-self is not mine, I am not that, that is not my self.
(S 3:82 f; see Dh 277-79 = Tha 676-78, Pm 2:106 for simplified versions)

— — —

The Discourse to Udāyī (on Not-self)

(S 35.234/4:166-168)

1 At one time the venerable Ānanda and the venerable Udāyī were staying in Ghosita's Park near Kosambī.

Udāyī questions Ānanda

2 Then the venerable Udāyī, having emerged from his evening solitary retreat, approached the venerable Ānanda.

Having approached the venerable Ānanda and exchanged greetings with him, he sat down at one side.

3a Seated thus at one side, the venerable Udāyī said this to the venerable Ānanda:

“Avuso Ānanda, this body (*kāya*) has in many ways been shown, revealed and declared by the Blessed One, thus:

‘Thus [For this reason] is this body not-self.’ (*Iti 'pāyam kāyo anattā' ti.*)

Can this consciousness (*viññāna*) be explained in just this manner, that is, to point out, teach, proclaim, establish, reveal, explain and clarify it thus:

‘Thus is this consciousness not-self?’”

3b “Avuso Udāyī, just as this body has in many ways been shown, revealed and declared by the Blessed One, thus:

‘Thus [For this reason] is this body not-self.’

This consciousness can be explained in just this manner, that is, to point out, teach, proclaim, establish, reveal, explain and clarify it thus:

‘Thus is this consciousness not-self’.

The not-self characteristic of consciousness

4 (1) Doesn't the eye-consciousness, avuso, arise in dependence of the eye and forms?”

“Yes, it does, avuso.”

“If the cause and condition for the arising of the eye-consciousness were all to cease completely without any remainder, could the eye-consciousness be discerned?”

“No, avuso.”

“In this way, avuso, this has in many ways been shown, revealed and declared, in a manner of speaking (*pariyāyena*), by the Blessed One, thus:

‘Thus [For this reason] is this consciousness not-self.’

5 (2) Doesn't the ear-consciousness, avuso, arise in dependence of the ear and sounds?”

“Yes, it does, avuso.”

“If the cause and condition for the arising of the ear-consciousness were all to cease completely without any remainder, could the ear-consciousness be discerned?”

“No, avuso.”

“In this way, avuso, this has in many ways been shown, revealed and declared, in a manner of speaking, by the Blessed One, thus:

‘Thus is this consciousness not-self.’

6 (3) Doesn't the nose-consciousness, avuso, arise in dependence of the nose and smells?”

“Yes, it does, avuso.”

“If the cause and condition for the arising of the nose-consciousness were all to cease completely without any remainder, could the nose-consciousness be discerned?”

“No, avuso.”

“In this way, avuso, this has in many ways been shown, revealed and declared, in a manner of speaking, by the Blessed One, thus:

‘Thus [For this reason] is this consciousness not-self.’

7 (4) Doesn't the tongue-consciousness, avuso, arise in dependence of the tongue and tastes?”

“Yes, it does, avuso.”

“If the cause and condition for the arising of the tongue-consciousness were all to cease completely without any remainder, could the tongue-consciousness be discerned?”

“No, avuso.”

“In this way, avuso, this has in many ways been shown, revealed and declared, in a manner of speaking, by the Blessed One, thus:

‘Thus is this consciousness not-self.’

8 (5) Doesn’t the body-consciousness, avuso, arise in dependence of the body and touches?”

“Yes, it does, avuso.”

“If the cause and condition for the arising of the body-consciousness were all to cease completely without any remainder, could the body-consciousness be discerned?”

“No, avuso.”

“In this way, avuso, this has in many ways been shown, revealed and declared, in a manner of speaking, by the Blessed One, thus:

‘Thus [For this reason] is this consciousness not-self.’

9 (6) Doesn’t the mind-consciousness, avuso, arise in dependence of the mind and mind-objects?”

“Yes, it does, avuso.”

“If the cause and condition for the arising of the mind-consciousness were all to cease completely without any remainder, could the mind-consciousness be discerned?”

“No, avuso.”

“In this way, avuso, this has in many ways been shown, revealed and declared, in a manner of speaking, by the Blessed One, thus:

‘Thus is this consciousness not-self.’

Simile of the plantain tree

10 Suppose,⁹ avuso, a person in need of heartwood, in search of heartwood, wandering about seeking heartwood, were to take a sharp axe and enter a forest. Therein he would see the trunk of a huge plantain tree, straight, young [fresh], without a solid pith.¹⁰ **[168]** He would cut it down at the root, cut off the crown, and unroll the coil.

Therein he would not find even sapwood, let alone heartwood.

11 Even so, avuso, a monk does not notice either a self or anything belonging to a self in these six bases of contact.

Since he does not notice any such thing, he does not cling to anything in the world.

Not clinging, he is not agitated.

Being not agitated, he personally attains nirvana.

He understands, ‘Birth is destroyed. The holy life has been lived. Done is what needs to be done. There is no more of this state.’”

— evaṃ —

081020; 090429; 090526

⁹ A similar parable is found in **Phena,piṇḍa S** (S 22.95.9/3:141) = SD 17.12.

¹⁰ *So tattha passeyya mahantaṃ kadali-k,khandhaṃ ujum̐ navam̐ akukkuka,jātam̐.* “Without shoots” (*akukkuka,-jātam̐*), as at M 1:233,18 = S 3:141,28 = 4:167,32 ≠ A 2:220,22. SA: there is no pith growing inside (*anto asañjāta,-ghana,danḍakam̐*, SA 2:323); MA: at flowering time, the inside of a single solid core (pith) grows the size of a thumb; the meaning is that this is not the case (*akukkuka,jātan ti puppha.gahaṇa,kāle anto aṅguṭṭha-p,pamāṇo eko ghana,danḍako nibbattati, tena virahitan ti attho*, MA 2:279). See **Phena,piṇḍa S** (S 22.95.9/3:141) = SD 17.12.